

CPI(M)

Lok Sabha Election 2009

**AAM AADMI SUFFERS
IN 'HIGH GROWTH'
INDIA**

**Dalits and
Tribals**

CAMPAIGN FOLDER



Vote CPI(M)

**Strengthen the Left and Democratic Forces
to Ensure an Alternative Secular
Government at the Centre**

Dalits and Adivasis together constitute about 25% of the Indian population. Yet governments headed by the BJP and the Congress in their pursuit of neo-liberal policies have intensified the problems faced by these sections.

DENIAL OF CONSTITUTIONAL GUARANTEE

In its CMP, the UPA had promised that all reservation quotas, including those relating to promotions, would be fulfilled in a time-bound manner through a Reservation Act that will be enacted and it professed its 'sensitivity' towards affirmative action by promising reservation in the private sector.

But what did it do?

Of the 1,70,000 posts lying vacant in the Railways alone, 32,600 jobs that belong to the SCs and STs are not yet filled up. Over 13,000 vacancies in the promotional quota were denied to SCs and STs because the Congress-led government found them 'incapable' for recruitment and thousands of jobs denied in the direct recruitment in government services. By taking refuge in the ruling elite's conception of merit and eligibility, the Congress has once again revealed its true class character.

The Congress-led government was more concerned in keeping corporates happy which is why they did not take forward the assurance for reservations of jobs for STs and SCs in the private sector.

CONSPIRING AGAINST SOCIAL JUSTICE

Shamefully, the Congress-led Government actually tried to dereserve jobs in higher educational institutions. In a conspiracy against SC and STs the Congress brought a Bill to Parliament without any prior discussion. When there was a furore going on in Parliament on another anti-worker measure, the Government, in a deliberate conspiracy, pushed through the Bill. Through this legislation, it attempted to exempt some 47 institutions of higher education in this country from fulfilling their constitutional obligation of providing reservation in scientific and technical posts. The pro-rich anti-dalit bias of the Congress-led combine was exposed by the Left parties who with the help of other secular parties, protested against the legislation in the Lok Sabha and stalled it. It was only this intervention which prevented the conspiracy from succeeding.

TRAIL OF BETRAYAL IN SPECIAL COMPONENT PLAN

The concept of a special component plan for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes arises because of the continuing

discrimination against them. This is brought out clearly by even the underestimations of government statistics.

~ 37% of the SCs and 47% of tribals in rural areas are below the poverty line (XI Plan Documents). In urban areas, 33% of dalits and 40% of tribals fall below the poverty line.

~ Till 2006, the infant mortality rate of SCs was 70 and STs 83. The under-5 mortality rate was 94.3 for SCs and 113 for STs, both significantly higher than the all India average and also of other disadvantaged sections. (NFHS-3)

~ More than half the children and women among dalits and tribals faced malnutrition and hunger. The underweight children amongst STs were 55.6% and for SCs 53.5%.

~ In 2007, more than 36% of SCs and 40% of STs dropped out of school at the primary stage itself. The drop out rate for the entire elementary education level is more than 56% of SCs and 62% of STs.

~ In the age group of 15-49 years, 73% of dalit women and 79% of tribal women remain illiterate.

Instead of focussing resource allocations and allocating 16% of the expenditures for Scheduled Castes as mandated by policy, the government not only kept the allocations low but successfully sabotaged any monitoring mechanism. In 2009-10, a meagre 7% was allocated for SCs, whereas the policy demands 16.2%. This was even lower than the previous year's allocation of 7.1%. Thus more than 50% of what was due to dalits has been denied to them.

In case of the Tribal Sub Plan, the UPA consistently betrayed the tribal population of the country by not reaching the policy level of 6% and in fact all through the five years, the allocation remained to just about 4% of the total plan allocation.

HOLLOW PROMISE OF RESTORING LAND RIGHTS

The CMP promised that landless families would be endowed with land through implementation of land ceiling and land redistribution legislation. It promised that no reversal of ceilings legislation would be permitted.

But not a single initiative was taken by the Congress-led government to implement measures towards redistribution of land. In fact, the Congress actually allowed some of its own state governments to reverse land ceiling to benefit private business interests. It also conspired with state governments to allow land in Fifth Schedule areas to be taken over by corporates behind the backs of tribals.

According to the latest available estimates in rural areas, SCs

own only 9.4 % of the land and their holdings have an average size of 0.33 hectares and STs own 11.2% of the land with 0.77 hectares as size of average holdings (XI Plan Documents).

This land holding pattern has led to indebtedness with about 20% of the STs and a 27% of SCs having registered indebtedness in rural areas. This does not include those who have taken informal debts, which are largely unrecorded. In urban areas, 12% of the STs and about 20% of SCs are indebted (XI Plan Documents).

On the other hand, it is the Left Front Government in West Bengal, which still stands first among states to have distributed the maximum land to the SCs and the STs in the entire country. West Bengal accounts for 22.6% of the total land distributed in the country since Independence, and 54.5% of the total number of beneficiaries from land distribution programmes, the majority of whom are dalits and adivasis.

LEFT INTERVENTION IN ENACTING RIGHTS OF FOREST DWELLERS

The CPI(M) played a most significant role in the enactment of the Schedule Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2007 (Forest Rights Act) to guarantee the rights of forest dependent people. The original draft Bill presented by the government would have become an instrument to evict tribals. The CPI(M) MPs along with other concerned organisations and individuals fought hard to change the provisions. The government delayed the process but in the meanwhile brought another Bill called the Wild Life Protection Bill which in the name of protecting wild life would have decimated the rights of tribals. The CPI(M) blocked the anti-tribal provisions of that Bill and succeeded in bringing in twelve amendments which strengthened tribal rights.

As a result of the CPI(M) pressure and the movements of tribals throughout the country, the government was ultimately forced to bring the Forest Rights Bill to Parliament. The intervention of the CPI(M) ensured that crucial changes earlier suggested by the Joint Parliamentary Committee and which had been rejected by the government were included.

Among them were the following clauses:

- ~ Non-tribal traditional forest dwellers included in the purview of the Act;
- ~ Cut off year was shifted from 1980 to December 2005;
- ~ Rights of tribal and traditional forest dwellers in critical wildlife habitats areas in protected areas recognized so that no

relocation without first recognizing rights;

~ Identification of “critical wildlife habitats” made more transparent, scientific and democratic rather than sole discretion of Forest Department;

~ Ceiling of 2.5 hectares on individual land rights increased to 4 hectares;

~ Rights to minor forest produce strengthened;

~ A more accountable and decentralized process adopted;

~ Women’s rights to land, community resources and MFP ensured.

But at the last minute under the direct intervention of the Prime Minister, the Congress betrayed the people by bringing in a most objectionable clause that traditional non-tribal forest dwellers would have to prove that they lived in the forest for 75 years as a condition to get pattas for land under their occupation. Many scheduled castes and poorer sections of people have lived on the forest land for generations but have no proof. The Congress under pressure of forest vested interests wants to evict them and takeover the land to give away to other powerful corporates. The CPI(M) holds that while there must be strict control to ensure that non-tribal vested interests are not given pattas, the 75 year condition for genuine forest dwellers has to be removed. CPI(M) will fight to ensure that the new government changes this provision.

Even though the Act has been passed the Environment Ministry in the Congress-led government continues to hand over forest land to corporates for mining and other projects without consulting tribals. In just five years 5.73 lakh hectares of such land was diverted.

ATROCITIES AND VIOLENCE

Casteist forces and reactionary elements have continued to subject the vast sections of the adivasis and dalits in the country to severe repression and their atrocities went unchecked by the government. In particular the heinous practices of untouchability, caste violence and humiliation against dalits and especially dalit women have not been controlled by the government. It was during the tenure of the UPA that the worst atrocities were committed against the dalits, like that of Khairlanji in Maharashtra when a dalit woman and her three children were brutally killed. It was the intervention of the CPI(M) along with dalit organisations which ensured that a CBI inquiry and some of the guilty were brought to justice. However a few powerful individuals involved have got away

and the government has refused to ensure a review of the case. There was a lack of political will to deal with such forces.

In the Left-ruled states, caste atrocities are not tolerated. In vast parts of India, casteist forces and parties, playing vote bank politics, often protect the perpetrators of atrocities against dalits. Very few cases are registered. Further, only 19% of these cases were taken to trial by courts. Seven years after the gruesome incident in Jhajjar, Haryana, where seven dalits were massacred, the culprits have not yet been brought to justice.

CONCLUSION

The CPI (M) stands for abolition of caste inequality and injustice. It is opposed to any exploitation of caste identities for narrow political gains.

The CPI (M) has always stood for the cause of dalits and adivasis of this country, both within the Parliament and outside.

The CPI (M) will continue to fight to ensure land distribution; equal opportunities in education and employment and oppose all forms of discrimination in meeting the basic needs of dalits and adivasis of this country. It will stand by them in protecting their dignity and security.

The BJP-led NDA and the Congress-led UPA have failed to bring justice to dalits and adivasis. It is essential to ensure an alternative secular government at the centre to protect their rights. The role of the CPI(M) is crucial in this endeavour.

We appeal to all sections of the people to support the CPI (M) and the Left in this election.

Vote CPI(M)

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Alternative Secular Government at the Centre**



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